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ABSTRACT

Immigration has made public housing populations increasingly diverse, a challenge met by administrators and staff at two housing developments participating in the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families. Immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Latin America have settled beside native-born Americans. Foreign-born residents' needs extend beyond basic language training and assistance in workforce preparation. They are a diverse group, consisting of urban professionals who need certification, rural villagers barely literate in native languages, and others with physical ailments and psychological traumas. By their variety and prevalence in residents' lives, distinctive issues present major challenges. They may be reluctant to use child care and expose their children to alien cultural practices. Jobs-Plus staff are well-versed in social cues of ethnic groups, including taboos against certain foods, and mixed meetings of men and women. Employment programs clash with cultural priorities in that pressure to direct women into the workforce runs counter to traditional gender roles and encouraging residents to invest financial assets competes with responsibility to remit savings to relatives. Staff leave their offices to reach out to and accompany residents off-site to social service agencies, clinics, and immigration offices. Programs must balance residents' needs and preferences for culturally specific services with goals of preparing them to function in a

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diverse workplace and building a multicultural community. (YLB)

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The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities

The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments

Linda Yuriko Kato

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Overview

Recent waves of immigration have made public housing populations around the nation increasingly diverse, challenging housing authorities to find new ways to provide employment assistance to residents of different ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. This report examines how the challenge was met by administrators and staff at two housing developments participating in the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families, a demonstration project under way in six cities that combines employment assistance, rent incentives, and community-building supports to make work pay by significantly increasing residents' income. At the two developments — Rainier Vista in Seattle, Washington, and Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul, Minnesota — immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Latin America who speak nearly two dozen languages settled alongside native-born African-American and Caucasian residents. The varied needs of the foreign-born residents extended far beyond basic language training and assistance in preparing for the workforce. A diverse group themselves, the immigrant residents included urban professionals in need of certification to practice in the United States, rural villagers barely literate in their native languages, and others afflicted by physical ailments and psychological traumas arising from war, torture, and famine.

By their variety and prevalence in the lives of the developments' residents, these distinctive issues presented major challenges:

- **Reading cultural cues.** Social, personal, and domestic issues that hamper the work efforts of low-income people in the United States had additional cultural dimensions in the case of the foreign-born residents that did not respond readily to standard employment and support services. For instance, foreign-born residents were often reluctant to use professional child care for fear of exposing their children to alien cultural practices, in addition to concern for their children's safety. Thus, to supplement their broad knowledge of employment issues, the Jobs-Plus staff became well versed in the social cues of the ethnic groups, such as taboos that some groups had against certain foods or mixed meetings of men and women in these developments.

- **Values and work.** Employment programs sometimes clashed with cultural priorities. Pressures to direct women into the workforce ran counter to residents' desire to maintain their traditional gender roles. Similarly, efforts to encourage residents to invest in financial assets and homeownership programs competed with residents' responsibility to remit savings to relatives overseas.

- **Institutional barriers.** Foreign-born residents were often unfamiliar with a range of institutions in the United States, including employment programs. To help close this gap, program staff adopted a flexible understanding of their service roles, often leaving their offices to reach out to residents in their homes and to accompany them off-site to social service agencies, medical clinics, and immigration offices.

- **Administrative equity.** Jobs-Plus programs had to balance residents' needs and preferences for culturally specific services with the goals of preparing them to function in a diverse workplace and building a peaceful, multicultural community in the housing developments. And difficult choices have had to be made about which groups to accommodate with culturally specific services — decisions that inevitably incurred the dissatisfaction of those who were overlooked, including U.S.-born residents. To leverage limited funds and staff time, the programs partnered with local ethnic agencies and hired ethnic staff, including well-respected residents, to build trust and provide culturally appropriate services to the foreign-born residents.

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Preface

The challenge to transform public housing from low-work, high-welfare developments into healthy communities where residents' employment and greater economic independence are the norm has long been one of public policy's most daunting. It is a challenge that has grown over the past 30 years as public housing developments across the nation have come to include increasing numbers of refugees and other immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Fleeing war, civil strife, and economic deprivation, the new residents seek opportunities to support their families and, like generations of immigrants before them, contribute their talents and energy to fuel our nation's economic and cultural dynamism.

This report examines the how cultural and social issues of serving ethnically diverse concentrations of immigrants who reside in public housing have manifested themselves in the provision of employment assistance through the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families. The broad, multifaceted goals of Jobs-Plus are to increase significantly the employment and wage levels of public housing residents at developments in six cities by operating on-site to offer a combination of employment services, establish rent policies that help make work pay, and engage in community-building efforts. But Jobs-Plus has encountered complications at two of the developments — Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Rainier Vista in Seattle, Washington — that test the efficacy of its approach. There, the many cultures and languages of diverse populations of foreign-born residents and the related employment problems they faced compelled Jobs-Plus program designers and administrators to devise creative new ways to provide services.

The insights of the Jobs-Plus experience in St. Paul and Seattle — particularly the efficient marshalling of scarce resources and addressing workforce readiness issues in effective, culturally appropriate ways — are applicable to other public housing authorities. They are relevant, as well, to agencies that, through their work with populations who do not live in public housing, seek to help low-income foreign-born residents build futures in this country.

MDRC is conducting a multiyear evaluation of Jobs-Plus's efforts to assess the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of this program. We are grateful to the sponsors who helped conceive and develop the Jobs-Plus initiative and to all those striving to make it real and effective on the ground — especially the Jobs-Plus staff, who have been working tirelessly to engage residents and sustain their work efforts, and the participating residents, who have the greatest stake in building vibrant communities.

Gordon Berlin
Senior Vice President

Acknowledgments

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Project coordinators at the Jobs-Plus sites also provided indispensable help. Sandy Gerber and Chia Vang assisted greatly by arranging staff and resident interviews in St. Paul. In Seattle, Ed Liebow directs and conducts the field research for the Jobs-Plus demonstration with the assistance of Carolina Katz and Gabrielle O'Malley; his help and perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this report greatly strengthened the final result. Many thanks are due as well to the residents and the staff members of Jobs-Plus, the housing management offices, and other local service agencies in St. Paul and Seattle who kindly shared their reflections with us in interviews for this report.

Valuable insights and feedback on earlier drafts were also provided by Seanna Melchior of the Jobs-Plus staff in Seattle, by the staff members of Jobs-Plus and of the housing management office in St. Paul, and by the Jobs-Plus collaborative members in St. Paul, particularly Joanne MacDonald of the St. Paul Public Housing Authority and Sally Brown of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. At MDRC, Alissa Gardenhire, Marilyn Price, Donna Wharton-Fields, and Valerie Chase offered helpful input during the report's conceptual stages. Louis Richman and Robert Weber reviewed and edited later drafts, and Johanna Walter and Kristin Feeley developed the demographic charts.

The Author

Introduction

Rainier Vista Garden Community in Seattle, Washington, and Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul, Minnesota, are two public housing developments for low-income residents. As is the case in growing numbers of public housing developments around the country, many of the people who live in these two are foreign-born, having come to the United States from East Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and settled alongside native-born African-American and Caucasian residents. One can hear, for instance, conversations in as many as 22 languages in the tree-shaded public spaces around the Rainier Vista development. In this rich mixture of people and cultures lies an extensive array of challenges for the public agencies that administer the programs designed to help residents enter the U.S. workforce.

A senior member of Rainier Vista's management staff approaches the Job Resource Center, which houses various services offered by Jobs-Plus, a new employment program for the residents. He enters and is greeted by Jobs-Plus staff members with whom he has a meeting and by numerous residents who are there for a class in English as a Second Language (ESL). When introduced to several residents who are wearing traditional Muslim headscarves, he is careful not to offer his hand to shake. Once at a meeting of the residents, he had tried to help an East African woman put on a headset for translating the proceedings into her language, but some of the East African men subsequently told him that he shouldn't touch an East African woman unless he is her spouse or relative. "The men were nice about it," said the management staff member, since he was only trying to be helpful. But the incident illustrated for him the sensitivities that can arise when working with many different cultures in a public housing development.

Rainier Vista in Seattle and Mt. Airy in St. Paul are two of seven "low-work, high-welfare" public housing developments around the country where Jobs-Plus is being tried, to help the residents get jobs and move permanently off public assistance.[1] As described in Box 1, the Jobs-Plus model operates on-site at the housing development and offers residents a combination of job search assistance and access to training and education opportunities, rent policies that help "make work pay," and community-building efforts that support working residents. But the many cultures, languages, and immigration-related challenges at these two

[1]The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families is funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and The Rockefeller Foundation, with additional support from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor; the Joyce, James Irvine, Surdna, Northwest Area, Annie E. Casey, Stuart, and Washington Mutual Foundations; and BP. The demonstration is being managed by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which is also carefully evaluating the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of the program. The demonstration will continue at least through 2003.

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Box 1

The Jobs-Plus National Demonstration and Model

The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families ("Jobs-Plus" for short) is a national demonstration that seeks to significantly increase the rate of steady work and the earnings of residents of "low-work, high-welfare" public housing developments. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is conducting a multiyear evaluation of Jobs-Plus, which was jointly developed by The Rockefeller Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and MDRC. The evaluation is assessing the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of the employment program, which will continue at least through 2003.

The Jobs-Plus approach uses an innovative, three-pronged strategy of employment services, financial work incentives, and social supports to help residents acquire employment and self-sufficiency. The *employment-related services* component includes job search skills, education programs, vocational training, and assistance with child care and transportation. The *financial work incentives* component involves changes in public housing rent rules that help "make work pay" by reducing the extent to which gains in household income from higher earnings are offset by increases in rent. The *community support for work* component aims to strengthen neighbor-to-neighbor support for residents' efforts to work.*

Local Jobs-Plus programs are charged with offering these components to all working-age residents living in a Jobs-Plus development. Programs are currently under way in Chattanooga (Tennessee), Dayton (Ohio), Baltimore (Maryland), Los Angeles (California), St. Paul (Minnesota), and Seattle (Washington). In about half the developments, almost all the residents are African-American. But the developments in St. Paul, Seattle, and Los Angeles are ethnically diverse, including residents primarily of Latino, Southeast Asian, and East African backgrounds. Seattle's Jobs-Plus program is no longer in the demonstration because the development is under HOPE VI renovation. However, Jobs-Plus became the foundation for the HOPE VI community and supportive services plan, and the program continues in that form.†

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*For more details about the Jobs-Plus program, see James A. Riccio, *Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration* (New York: MDRC, 1999).

†HOPE VI is a federal program under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that funds the replacement or reconstruction of deteriorating public housing developments.

developments complicate the efforts of an employment program like Jobs-Plus to assist the residents (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). Of the working-age household heads who were surveyed in 1998 at Rainier Vista and in 1999 at Mt. Airy, the majority identified themselves as foreign-born (61.4 percent at Rainier Vista and 66.7 percent at Mt. Airy). At Rainier Vista about half these foreign-born residents were Southeast Asians who primarily came from Vietnam, whereas at Mt. Airy more than 80 percent of them were also Southeast Asians but were mostly Hmong refugees from Laos. However, over the course of the demonstration, the numbers of residents from Africa (mostly refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia) and from Mexico and Central America have grown significantly at both these developments. Many residents are not U.S. citizens, but the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) permits noncitizens to apply for public housing as long as they can produce documentation of legal immigration status in the United States.[2]

This account looks at how Jobs-Plus has provided employment services at these two multicultural housing developments. It draws on numerous intensive interviews and observations of program activities that were conducted by on-site field researchers and the author over a period of two years, from 2000 to 2002. Those who were interviewed sometimes repeatedly over these years include almost three dozen residents as well as staff members of the Jobs-Plus programs and the housing management offices at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista and representatives of partner agencies that assisted Jobs-Plus participants.

As the sketches of both communities reveal, Jobs-Plus must address a wide range of social, personal, and domestic issues as well as work experience and skill needs that can hamper a foreign-born resident's ability to participate in the U.S. workplace. It is the cultural dimensions of the hurdles that foreign-born residents face in accessing services and getting jobs that prompt a Jobs-Plus staff member at Mt. Airy to exclaim: "We have issues that are so different from other [Jobs-Plus] sites that are around."

In addition to the obvious barriers the residents face in using an unfamiliar language, a number of them are encumbered with more severe burdens. Some bear the psychological scars of war, torture, and famine. Traditional childrearing practices may discourage professional child care use and aggravate conflict between parents and their teenage children, who are growing up in the United States. And traditional gender roles sometimes undermine women's work efforts.

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[2]Noncitizens who are refugees have been granted asylum in the United States by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) because they are unable or unwilling to return to their countries of origin as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Unlike other immigrants, refugees have legal access to public benefits available to low-income U.S. citizens — cash welfare, health care, food assistance — as long as they meet the income criteria for eligibility.

Table 1

Selected Characteristics of Households in Jobs-Plus Developments in St. Paul and Seattle in 1997
(Before Jobs-Plus)

Characteristic	St. Paul (Mt. Airy Homes)	Seattle (Rainier Vista)
Characteristics of household heads		
Race (%)		
White (non-Hispanic)	5	12
Black (non-Hispanic)	24	42
Hispanic	3	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	65	43[c]
Other	3	3
Female (%)	65	74
Elderl [c](%)	8	16
Disabled (%)	27	31
Characteristics of households		
Number of adults in household (%)		
One	46	63
Two or more	54	37
Number of children in household (%)		
None	10	34
One	13	29
Two	17	18
Three or more	59	18
Length of residence (%)		
Less than one year	6	9
Ten years or more	22	2
Number of occupied units	298	467

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from tenant rosters provided by housing authorities in October 1997.

NOTES:

[a]Includes a large proportion of East African immigrants.

[b]Includes primarily Southeast Asian immigrants (mostly Hmong).

[c]Includes primarily Southeast Asian immigrants from Cambodia and Vietnam.

[d]The definition of race in the "other" category includes Native Americans and a small number of people for whom the data are ambiguous.

[e]People 62 years of age or older.

Jobs-Plus capitalizes on the fact that it operates on-site and in proximity to residents by hiring staff, including residents, from the various ethnic groups and by working with the housing management staff and local ethnic agencies to provide services that are culturally sensitive to residents' customs and priorities. Staff members go door-to-door to reach out to residents in their homes and accompany them to classrooms, clinics, and courts. But given the limits of funding and staff time, the program struggles with the ongoing dilemma of determining which of the residents' wide-ranging needs should be addressed. And how far should the program go to accommodate residents' needs and preferences for ethnically specific services while seeking to prepare them for a multicultural workplace?

Expanding Service Roles and Sensitivities to Help Immigrants Get Jobs

This report begins with the accounts of an Ethiopian gentleman in Seattle and a Laotian couple in St. Paul who are making significant strides in their newly adopted country, followed by bleaker accounts of a Somali single mother and a Laotian couple in St. Paul who are struggling to make ends meet on low-wage jobs. Their contrasting stories illustrate the wide disparities in skill levels and the obstacles to employment that exist among the foreign-born residents at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista and that challenge Jobs-Plus's efforts to help residents secure employment and economic stability for their families.

Mr. Oman and the Lee Family: Starting Over in the USA[3]

Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista are abuzz with morning activity as schoolchildren make their way to the bus stop and adults depart for work in cars and city buses. Mr. Lee drives away from Mt. Airy to the job that Jobs-Plus helped him train for and find, as a technician at a computer firm outside St. Paul. Mrs. Lee walks their four children to the bus stop before attending her ESL class at Jobs-Plus. Both parents were awake before dawn to snatch some time for study before the children rose. Mr. Lee reads about new technology and software, to improve his job prospects. At Rainier Vista, Mr. Oman also leaves his apartment for his job, as an accounting clerk at a firm in downtown Seattle. Mr. Oman is an Ethiopian who came to the United States about a decade ago, along with waves of other refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia fleeing the wars, civil strife, and famine that have ravaged that region. Similar conditions prompted the Lees to leave Laos to join relatives in St. Paul some years earlier. But when they came to the United States, Mr. Oman was an educated professional with an urban background,

[3]Fictional names have been substituted for the actual names of residents, and some details about them ave been altered to protect their identities.

Table 2

Country of Origin of Heads of Household in Jobs-Plus Developments in St. Paul and Seattle, 1998-1999

Characteristic	St. Paul (Mt. Airy Homes)	Seattle (Rainier Vista)
Born outside of U.S. or a U.S. territory (%)	66.7	61.4
Country of origin of foreign-born residents (%)		
Africa[a]	5.0	9.5
Ethiopia	2.0	6.3
Somalia	2.0	1.3
Other Africa	1.0	1.9
Asia	89.2	49.4
Cambodia	2.9	5.7
Laos	79.4	0.0
Vietnam	6.9	43
Other Asian	0.0	0.6
Latin America	2.0	0.6
El Salvador	0.0	0.6
Mexico	2.0	0.0
Baseline survey respondents	252	158

SOURCE: Jobs-Plus baseline survey of working-age household heads conducted in 1998 at Rainier Vista and in 1999 at Mt. Airy Homes.

NOTE:

[a]The number of residents of East African origin grew steadily at both developments over the course of the demonstration.

whereas the Lees were rural villagers. Mr. Oman and the Lees therefore reflect the wide socio-economic spectrum that exists among the immigrants who have settled at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista, even among those who come from the same regional and ethnic backgrounds.

But no matter what training, experience, or social status they have brought to this country from their native lands, the foreign-born residents of Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista share in common the desire for stability and opportunity for their families and a willingness to work hard to realize these goals. And most of the men have moved fairly rapidly into jobs in the United States. However, they have all had trouble qualifying for employment beyond low-paying, entry-level positions. Even those who arrived with impressive professional credentials

have invariably ended up like the man waving at Mr. Oman from his taxi — a civil engineer who now drives a cab — because their credential is from a government that no longer exists. The women have had greater difficulty than the men in securing better-paying employment. In the past, they had fewer opportunities than the men for formal education, and their experiences selling homemade crafts and farm produce at the village marketplace do not translate readily into skills for the American workplace. "Some people," Mr. Oman says, "have language problems and are not able to get a good job. Other people are not happy with $6 or $7 per hour."

The task of an employment program like Jobs-Plus in serving foreign-born residents seems pretty straightforward: provide residents like Mr. Oman and the Lees with the language skills, job training, and employer contacts needed to get decent jobs in the United States. As Rainier Vista's job developer repeats constantly like a mantra: "No piecework, no fish guts." Indeed, Jobs-Plus has been an important source of opportunities for both Mr. Oman and the Lees. On hearing at a resident council meeting that Jobs-Plus could help the residents get jobs, Mr. Oman promptly went to the program's office the next day, announcing, "I like to know about computers, and I want to get a job." An energetic, dedicated staff member helped Mr. Oman, who had some accounting experience, to enroll in computer and accounting courses at a community college and then find a job as an accounting clerk. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Lee eagerly turned to Jobs-Plus "for help to find a job and to improve ourselves, to get more skills" in order to learn, work, and advance in an information economy. They made extensive use of Jobs-Plus's services at Mt. Airy's Community Center, including the ESL, General Educational Development (GED) certificate, driver's education, and citizenship classes; the child care program; and assistance for Mr. Lee in getting microcomputer training at a technical institute and then finding a computer job.

Furthermore, Jobs-Plus offers working residents at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista the added benefit of the rent incentives program — "a good deal" that makes working and earning more money worthwhile for a public housing resident. "Under the old system," says Mr. Oman, "if you work, they raise the rent," because rent levels in public housing are calculated according to household income levels. However, under the rent incentives program, "Jobs-Plus can freeze your rent," so that higher earnings do not lead automatically to rent increases. Moreover, "You can have three or four people in your house work, and it doesn't matter, your rent stays the same." "You can save a lot of money that way," Mr. Oman emphasizes, especially if there are multiple earners in the household. The savings help considerably to make the immigrants' dreams of leaving public housing and becoming homeowners a reality, since "everyone wants to buy a house."

Table 3

Income Sources of Households in Jobs-Plus Developments in St. Paul and Seattle in 1996 (Before Jobs-Plus)

Income Source	St. Paul (Mt. Airy Homes)	Seattle (Rainier Vista)
Any income from (%):		
Wages	16	20
AFDC	n/a	52
Welfare[a]	87	85
Number of housing units	297	481

SOURCE: Housing authority data as reported to MDRC in 1996 as part of the sites' Jobs-Plus application.

NOTE:

[a]Includes Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), state General Assistance payments, and Supplemental Security Income.

Mrs. Sudhir and the Kao Family: Multiple Employment Challenges

Helping foreign-born residents with their employment needs is usually not as straightforward as it was in the cases of Mr. Oman and the Lees. More typically, Jobs-Plus has to help residents at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista overcome multiple obstacles to accessing services and jobs, such as the difficulties faced by Mr. and Mrs. Kao, a couple from Laos, and Mrs. Sudhir, a Somali refugee who is single-handedly supporting five children.

Mrs. Kao is walking wearily with her baby girl to the family car to pick up her four oldest children from school. Soon they will be clamoring for her attention — help with homework, squabbling over their games — though it seems like only a moment ago that she woke them and drove them to school. There was no time during the day for her to rest after her night shift as a nursing assistant at a nearby hospital; she has had to look after the baby and do household chores. All too soon it will be time to leave again for work. Her husband will be coming home from his day shift to take his turn looking after the children. "I only get two or three hours of sleep — it's very hard," she sighs. Her state of exhaustion is chronic.

Across the street, Mrs. Sudhir finishes household chores before the children come home from school. She too hopes to snatch some sleep between her janitorial jobs at a hotel in the morning and at a supermarket in the evening. Mrs. Sudhir is the sole support for five children,

three of her own and two orphaned relatives, as well as for her elderly mother. The adult men of her family were all killed in the massacres of the bloody Somali civil war. "The community here has helped me so much," she says gratefully, in bringing stability to her family after the horrors of war and dislocation. Jobs-Plus helped her get the part-time jobs. And she points proudly to a used car that she has learned to drive and purchased and to the U.S. citizenship she has just acquired with Jobs-Plus's help. But her part-time jobs don't provide the wages and benefits that Mrs. Sudhir needs to end her family's reliance on welfare for medical and child care assistance and Food Stamps. And while Mrs. Sudhir's mother tries to help with the children, she is herself chronically ill from injuries and disease sustained during the war.

Since leaving their war-ravaged villages and then the refugee camps in Thailand and Kenya for the United States, life for these residents has been a daily struggle to make ends meet and stay afloat on low-wage jobs. "[We] don't have enough education," says Mrs. Kao, "so [we] get jobs in companies that don't pay enough — $7 or $8 an hour. Not enough to take care of the family." And, like many refugees at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista, Mr. Kao suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has had a hard time keeping a job for long. The women would like to take GED classes and get further training through Jobs-Plus for better jobs, but the responsibilities of child care and work prevent them from taking on another thing: "I'll wait until my little girl starts school and then maybe I'll look at more education," says Mrs. Kao. "It would be so hard to try and do your homework and the kids come and bother you." Although the rent incentives of Jobs-Plus provide a welcome break in expenses, they do not translate into additional savings; owning a home is a distant dream. "No, no savings," says Mrs. Sudhir; "the car, the insurance, the electricity [bill], and the children need the help more." And like many immigrants, Mrs. Sudhir sends money overseas to family members, who are still languishing in refugee camps in Kenya and depend desperately on her support.

In many ways, Mrs. Sudhir and the Kaos are like poor people across the nation — U.S.-born and foreign-born alike — who are struggling to raise families on low-wage jobs and to end their dependence on public assistance. They face multiple hurdles to getting the skills needed to qualify for better-paying work: long work hours . . . exhaustion at the end of the day . . . child care burdens . . . debilitating psychological problems. But the cultural dimensions add extra layers and complexity to the difficulties that foreign-born residents face that complicate efforts to provide employment assistance.

Recognizing how important it would be to assist residents with the many cultural barriers they face, administrators of the Job-Plus programs at both Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista are addressing some of the most pressing problems. Those addressed in the following sections include wide disparities in English proficiency levels among the residents, cultural barriers to using professional child care, post-traumatic stress disorder, and domestic problems that undercut employment retention.

Wide Disparities in English Proficiency Levels

While it is obvious that an employment program should help the foreign-born improve their English skills in order to advance in the workplace, Jobs-Plus has had to find ways to do that for residents with a wide range of English proficiency levels. At one end of the spectrum are residents who came to the United States with little or no formal education and may even be illiterate in their native language. Residents like these have had great difficulty learning to speak and write English. They need the most basic of literacy courses, since standard ESL classes are too advanced for them. At the other end of the spectrum are residents, like Mr. Oman, who would have been classified as English-proficient when they first came to Jobs-Plus but would have required more advanced ESL classes geared toward the vocabulary and language skills needed in the workplace to participate in training programs and qualify for better jobs. A job coach at Rainier Vista emphasized the dearth of such ESL services for the working poor: "The classes at Refugee Women's Alliance and the community college are too easy. These people need business English. We need to get ESL help to people in training programs. They won't make it through without writing and reading help."

Jobs-Plus and the housing management staff at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista rely both on staff members who speak some of the languages of residents and on local language services to translate oral and written communications about service appointments, community meetings, and other events at the developments. For residents who are illiterate, however, it isn't enough to translate flyers and mailings, because these people cannot read written communications at all. For instance, the staff at Mt. Airy spend a lot of time with the residents who are illiterate, explaining documents that have deadlines for responding, such as job announcements or lease information, or referring them to local refugee service agencies for this purpose. Such efforts consume considerable staff time and program resources, making it impossible to accommodate all the language groups and dialects at this development.

Cultural and Financial Barriers to Child Care

In order for residents to make use of ESL programs and employment services and keep the jobs they acquire, Jobs-Plus must also provide assistance with child care needs. Yet many foreign-born residents are reluctant to use professional child care services even when these are provided conveniently on-site, because it is generally outside their cultural experience to entrust their children to people beyond their circle of relatives and friends. "In my culture, they believe that the only way kids get proper care is when the parents are around," emphasized a Somali Muslim father. "And they don't like it if [the people who tend their children] don't share their culture, like they're afraid the kids will eat things not compatible with their culture." Such extended family members, however, are not always nearby to help with child care. In households with two working parents, mother and father can work different shifts and share the responsi-

bilities. But this sometimes means that neither parent is free — nor has any energy left — to take ESL classes and get the crucial training needed for better-paying jobs.

Jobs-Plus supported the efforts of residents of various ethnic groups to be trained as home-based child care providers in an effort to address these cultural concerns. But a Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista said: "I know we have several home childcares, but I don't think there are enough that take children of all ages, where they can take their whole family. . . . I know they don't like to split up their children." Furthermore, while the residents generally have access to subsidies from state welfare programs to help pay for child care, the costs in St. Paul can still be prohibitive for larger families subsisting on low-wage jobs, since the fees there are calculated on a per child basis.

Nightmares of the Past, Family Conflicts in the Present

Some foreign-born residents who come forward for employment services reveal the presence of personal and domestic problems in their communities that can undermine the ability to work. For instance, many of the refugees, like Mr. Kao, struggle with post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) of varying severity. Unhealed psychological wounds from their previous lives under brutal political oppression, war, and starvation undercut their capacity to access employment services, keep a job, and advance in a career. Mr. Kao complains of chronic headaches and falls into debilitating bouts of depression. He has been able to find only temporary employment, compelling Mrs. Kao to be the primary breadwinner.

"People need help with this," said a job coach at Rainier Vista. "I'm not a clinician, but I've seen it. . . . For people with PTSD, if there's a major shift or challenge in their lives, they just shut down. These residents try and go forward, but when they do, the unresolved issues of the past pop up. Bad things start to happen. Magical thinking. Culturally, we just don't recognize this as a subject matter." She referred to various leaders among the Southeast Asian and East African residents at Rainier Vista who "were all in jail for political reasons and tortured, but they're functional so we hold them up as the standard. We say, 'It's in the past so forget about it.' But it affects a lot of people when they try to do something new."

Foreign-born residents may also come home to family problems and conflicts that further undercut their ability to work. For example, some foreign-born women at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista endure domestic abuse, both physical and verbal, at the hands of their spouses or partners. Tensions can escalate when the women move out of the traditional gender roles of their cultures by taking jobs and acquiring an independent source of income, often in compliance with welfare reform regulations in the United States. "It's clearly a real barrier [for work among East African women]," observed a staff member of Rainier Vista's management office. "Men feel very threatened by women going to work. . . . A woman working [for pay in employment outside the home] in East African cultures is rather new."

Conflicts with teenage children and concerns about their falling into juvenile crime can also prevent foreign-born parents from getting and keeping a job. The juvenile offenses committed by some teens at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista are mostly at the level of truancy from school, vandalism, petty theft, fighting, and running away. But misbehavior by their teen children requires parents to take time from work to meet with school officials and police. Furthermore, in a public housing development, offenses that are minor in the juvenile justice system can still get the youthful offender's entire family evicted from their housing. A housing management staff member at Mt. Airy referred to the example of one family: "Single mom with a teenage daughter . . . [the daughter will] have parties. Teenage drinking. These are minor crimes in the juvenile system. But this teenager is jeopardizing her mother's housing." She emphasizes that the parents may "have to choose between finding a job [and] getting your kids up and off to school. But then your kids' behavior can get you kicked out of your housing. So it's almost a no-win situation."

Foreign-born parents are particularly hampered by their lack of knowledge of the systems, institutions, and popular culture with which their children interact daily, and they therefore have difficulty in effectively supporting their children in these contexts. Indeed, if adolescents and teen culture mystify and even alarm many American parents, this is even more the case for foreign-born parents from societies where such concepts do not even exist. "In our culture, in our country," said a Mt. Airy housing management staff member from Laos, "you are a kid and then an adult. There is nothing in between." In the cultures from which the foreign-born residents come, a teen's role is to go to work to contribute to the family income or at least to study hard at school and one day earn more than his or her parents. So parents often object to teens' spending time with friends, wearing trendy clothes, and listening to popular music, seeing these things as an unacceptable waste of time and money. And with all the media focus on ethnic gangs in their communities, parents assume that these behaviors are part of a slippery slope to drug use and gang activity.

Parents feel helpless to intervene as they see their authority over their children giving way to the growing influence of peers. An Oromo mother from Ethiopia exclaims anxiously: "My children come home, and I say, 'What is this?!' And they tell me, 'I just did what the other boy said. I just did what the other girls told me to do.' I cannot control my son anymore." But some parents rely on their children to undertake adult responsibilities for the family, for instance, to translate for them and even handle the family's financial transactions. Referring to some families at Mt. Airy, a Jobs-Plus staff member said: "The children manage everything. You should see the power that these children have." The children pay the rent. The children spend the Food Stamps (especially since this now involves using an ATM-style scanning card, which some residents find technically challenging). Such dependence on children further undercuts the parents' authority. And it also puts a lot of temptation in the children's way. A housing management staff member at Mt. Airy described a woman who came to the office about a past-

due rent notice. It turned out that she had asked her grandson to deliver the rent money and that he had spent the cash on himself. "The grandma just sat in my office and cried. 'I gave the money to my grandson. What's going on?!'" Such cultural misunderstandings, combined with strict restrictions and premature adult responsibilities, can alienate teens from their parents and contribute to the very behaviors that their parents fear.

"Seeing Things Happening in the Family"

Because of the factors described above, Jobs-Plus staff have learned that they must modify the program's employment focus and first help foreign-born residents to address psychological and domestic problems that can undermine their ability to get and keep a job. "I tell PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] victims that they need time to take care of themselves," said a Jobs-Plus staff member. "I give them a name of a counselor, or tell them that I'm here if they just want to talk. I've known some residents for two years and they're still in that space. I don't think we recognize how debilitating these experiences can be." But the staff have also had to do much more to identify likely cases of PTSD, domestic abuse, and parent-child conflicts — and to get residents who suffer from them to come forward for assistance. For instance, foreign-born victims of domestic abuse at both Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista face strong cultural pressures to conceal their problem. "I've heard," said a Rainier Vista housing management staff member, "that some women won't tell the female worker [at Refugee Women's Alliance, which works with Jobs-Plus on domestic violence] because the East African community here is very close-knit. They are hesitant to say anything." The housing management staff have access to information from the security police about incidents of domestic abuse that they have had to address. This reluctance to seek professional help is also true of parents who have troubled teens. A counselor of the Wilder Foundation's Southeast Asian Adjustment Program in St. Paul observed: "Many of the parents are protective. They don't want the issue to come out. But protecting the kids doesn't help."

Jobs-Plus and housing management staff make it a practice to leave their offices and go into the homes of the residents, where they can learn about people's lives, "see things happening in the family" (where the domestic problems that impede employment occur), build trust, and offer assistance in an acceptable manner. Being located on-site has helped tremendously. A Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista emphasized: "The cultural issues that came along were very different from the American-born residents. . . . We needed to do training services in non-traditional ways. We weren't taking advantage of our proximity if we didn't cross lines, going to homes, baby-sitting, visiting families."

Staff members make home visits during or after regular program hours. "I think [home visits are] very helpful," said a Jobs-Plus staff member at Mt. Airy. "I may not have seen a client for one or two months. They may have some needs, but they don't have time to call you." Even residents who are home during the day may not have phones. While this staff member

usually calls or sends a note in advance, she doesn't hesitate to drop in if she hasn't heard from the person. "I have a couple of cases. I couldn't reach them. I sent letters. No response. So what I did was just go down there and knock[ed] on the door. If they're home, I speak for 10 or 15 minutes just to see how they are. They usually welcome [me]."

Home visits can be particularly helpful in breaking down cultural barriers and getting those who suffer from PTSD and family problems to acknowledge these and consider referrals for professional help. But building trust and openness to professional help can take many months and multiple visits. A housing management staff member at Mt. Airy described one woman who answered the door with an ugly bruise on her face, claiming that she had fallen. Over the next four months, about once a week, she continued to visit this woman, who never initiated the meetings but always opened the door. (The staff member had not judged the situation to be so life-threatening that it required immediate, stronger intervention.) Over time, enough trust was built that the resident began confiding about the abuse and finally permitted the staff member to refer her for assistance to the Wilder Foundation's Southeast Asian Adjustment Program. In contrast, PTSD sufferer Mr. Kao has so far been slow to respond to the persistent phone inquiries and home visits of Jobs-Plus staff members who have been offering counseling, ESL classes, and employment assistance. In addition to help with PTSD, Mr. Kao needs to get a high school diploma and to learn sufficient English to communicate with his supervisors. "He really needs Jobs-Plus," Mrs. Kao insists. "He doesn't know how to find a job." But Mr. Kao says that the summers aggravate his headaches and that he'll use Jobs-Plus later, someday.

Partnerships with Local Ethnic Agencies

For foreign-born residents who are willing to consider professional assistance in dealing with domestic abuse, mental health issues, troubled teenagers, or the unrelenting demands of work and child care, Jobs-Plus and housing management staff work with local ethnic agencies to access or develop services that are sensitive to the community's cultural values. For instance, the staff at the Wilder Foundation's Southeast Asian Adjustment Program in St. Paul use support groups as one therapeutic intervention. But they worked with Jobs-Plus staff to modify this approach to accommodate both Southeast Asian cultural sensitivities and public housing conditions. "It was hard to bring clients into the group because it's not part of the culture," said one of the counselors. "[T]hey don't want to come to a group where they will have to talk and someone will facilitate and make them. So at first we just made it very low-key where people can drop in and socialize." The women in particular found that, by coming together for tea, they were able to recapture the sharing that they had known when they were working together on village farms: "Back home, they socialized from village to village by working together on the farm. Here we're different. Even though you have a neighbor next door, you don't talk to them. They don't have time to talk with you."

Separate support groups for men and women include up to 18 participants, ages 30 to 50. Jobs-Plus initially held these meetings on-site at Mt. Airy, but the residents worried about anonymity and safety: "What if I share and I have domestic violence in the house and my husband will know about it?" Living all together in a public housing development intensifies the residents' sense of vulnerability to communal scrutiny. So the meetings are now held at the Wilder Foundation offices; a van provides transportation. A counselor emphasized, however, that these therapeutic interventions are always focused on job readiness, seeking to get residents back to work as soon as possible: "We don't work [with clients to get them back on the job] a month down the line. We help them to go to work tomorrow and the next day and the next day."

One of Jobs-Plus's more poignant efforts to help parents at Mt. Airy deal with troubled teenage children has called on the Southeast Asian Adjustment Program to educate the parents about the juvenile justice system. This effort includes visits to the detention facilities where juveniles are placed for up to 24 hours after committing an offense, while they wait for their parents; and to Sinclair Camp, a rehabilitation facility for juvenile offenders that is operated by the Wilder Foundation and is located three hours from St. Paul, in the country. The goal of this effort is to prevent juvenile crime. By informing foreign-born parents about the laws, institutions, and services of the U.S. juvenile justice system, the aim is to get parents to identify emerging problems and cooperate with school and youth services staff early on, instead of protecting their teenagers until the problems become so serious that the police and housing management become involved. And if their teenage children do get into trouble, the parents need to know how to work with the system during the probationary period to make sure that the children do better and do not fall back into criminal activities. The message of the program is: "Don't hide the issue to the point that housing [management] will have to kick you out. Be alert to when your kids are starting [to get into trouble]. That is the point when we can help you." The program's low-key informational and educational approach — rather than the typical service approach involving personal or group counseling — has helped to increase the number of parents who participate and come forward for assistance.

The Cultural Understanding of Ethnic Staff

Entering the lives and homes of foreign-born residents and assisting them with domestic and employment issues have also required Jobs-Plus staff to develop considerable sensitivity to the customs and priorities of the various ethnic groups they serve. "You need that type of cultural training," a Rainier Vista housing management staff member emphasized. "There are so many different religions and customs. We don't have good knowledge of these things, but you need to know things like you don't walk into a Vietnamese home with your shoes on. You don't try to offend people, but sometimes if you don't know about their culture you can't help it."

Jobs-Plus has therefore benefited from staff members who speak the languages and share the backgrounds of the foreign-born residents at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista. They bring a

welcomed appreciation and sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of the residents' concerns, many of which they share. For instance, Mt. Airy has two employment counselors and a senior housing management administrator who speak Laotian, as well as a Vietnamese-speaking social worker at the management office. Like the foreign-born residents, these staff also made the journey from refugee camps to St. Paul; some were even residents at Mt. Airy in the past. They know what it is like to struggle in an alien culture for economic survival and self-respect, while drawing strength from their rich cultural heritage. At Rainier Vista, Jobs-Plus valued the cultural experience and extensive ethnic networks of the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) so much that it contracted with this advocacy organization to provide employment services to foreign-born women at the development, rather than with another program that had more experience with employment. A Jobs-Plus staff member said her efforts to engage Cambodian residents were assisted greatly by working closely with a Cambodian ReWA job coach who is a also a Rainer Vista resident: "Not many came in at first. Just recently we've gotten some key people placed. . . . [The Cambodian ReWA job coach] is incredible. She has a really strong relationship to the community, being a resident here as well, and organizing the Cambodian youth group. As my relationship with [her] has grown, we've seen more Cambodians coming in."

Jobs-Plus also relies on foreign-born residents — both as volunteers and as paid staff — to encourage members of their ethnic groups to participate in the program and to bring in their friends. Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista made rapid inroads into the ethnic communities by recruiting as outreach workers residents who had high standing and extensive networks. "When I think back to the first group," recalled a Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista, "they took a big chance coming in. It was outside of their cultural paradigm. They were very unusual people. . . . They thought they were coming to me for help, but they didn't realize that they were helping me out. These were all key people for me, leaders in the community. They started to bring their friends to me. . . . It really helped with recruitment."

The foreign-born residents of Rainier Vista are also helping to design culturally appropriate services. Supported by a grant from the City of Seattle, the residents are currently working with the job coaches to design a series of interactive employment training modules with PowerPoint software that will feature the languages and residents of the development — for instance, to show a job-seeker how to learn basic computer skills, interview for a job, or ask for a raise.

But Jobs-Plus in Seattle has also found that foreign-born residents are more likely to go to Jobs-Plus for services in response to the visits of outreach workers from their ethnic communities if U.S.-born staff members such as the job developer or job coach add their presence and authority to their overtures. "We've come to the realization," observed a U.S.-born staff member, "that we need people from a different culture to [follow the resident outreach worker and get the residents] more committed. Having [residents from the same ethnic community] do outreach is really good in terms of building trust, but when [the residents tell the outreach workers] that they will come, the commitment is less formal. . . . It's more like talking to family, so they

take it less seriously. [The job developer therefore] will go out with [the resident outreach workers] to help make it a more formal commitment. . . . Making a promise to [the job developer or job coach] is different from making a promise to [another resident]."

Going with Residents to Clinics and Courts

Assisting foreign-born residents with wide-ranging problems that can impede employment also requires Jobs-Plus staff to leave the housing development and accompany residents to appointments at social service agencies, family court or immigration offices, and job interviews. Said a Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista: "I've realized that there are services for people, but we need to provide much more support to them. I go to clinics with them, or find people to go with them. This type of activity is taking a lot of my time. They ask me, is that in your job description? I say well, yeah, who else is going to do it? These issues often influence whether someone works or doesn't work."

Situations that call for the supportive intervention of a Jobs-Plus staff member are both common — and potentially very consequential — for residents who need the help. For instance, unfamiliarity with the American legal system and limited English skills can keep foreign-born residents from securing essential rights, including compensation that employers owe them or restraining orders against abusive partners. "If you have language or cultural barriers, the court system is really difficult to understand and scary," said a Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista. "You don't have people to go to for help. [Foreign-born residents] tend to be afraid of the legal system. In their own country, going to court means that they could be put in jail right away or have their kids taken from them. They need someone to go with them, to explain how things work."

Limited English skills and unfamiliarity with service delivery systems in the United States can also complicate efforts to access such basic services as getting a telephone installed or applying for a driver's license or child care subsidies, which can be all important to getting and keeping a job. To remove barriers to these basic needs, Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista keeps the Job Resource Center open late several nights a week so that the staff can help residents with official documents as well as other concerns on a drop-in basis. A Vietnamese-speaking resident outreach worker rates this service as one of the top three reasons why Vietnamese residents turn to Jobs-Plus: "Because almost all Vietnamese people don't know how to fill out the papers and they don't know where they can go when they have a problem. So I just say if you have any questions, just come to Jobs-Plus and ask them to help you." Furthermore, Jobs-Plus recently arranged for a resident to be trained and hired part time to be a legal advocate who helps residents cope with paperwork and bureaucracies about issues ranging from late welfare checks to domestic violence and child support.

Similarly, the Southeast Asian residents at Mt. Airy call on the Southeast Asian staff at Jobs-Plus and the management office to advise them in dealing with all kinds of issues besides getting a job or paying the rent — from problems as serious as domestic abuse to matters as mundane as how to use the garden hose — and even to accompany them when they venture into unfamiliar settings where they may need help. "Big time, people walk in," said a housing management staff member. "Big time, phone calls."

To lighten the load of the staff, Jobs-Plus in St. Paul recently instituted a policy requiring them to refer residents who have issues unrelated to employment to other service agencies. But a staff member acknowledged that assistance that is not related to jobs builds trust and ties of obligation that can have payoffs for the program's employment goals: "If you can offer something that they truly believe will benefit them, then when you ask them to do something [that is directly related to work, such as attending an ESL class], even if they don't like it, they feel obligated to do it."

What Limits to Cultural Accommodation?

Ultimately, Jobs-Plus is an employment program. But its efforts to prepare foreign-born residents for the workforce and compliance with welfare-to-work mandates in the United States can challenge the cultural values, priorities, and practices of its participants even as it tries to accommodate them. This is particularly true regarding traditional gender roles that call for women to remain in the home and apart from men who are not family members. For instance, at a meeting of the Rainier Vista Jobs-Plus staff, a suggestion was made that the program sponsor English conversation sessions in the evenings, to be facilitated by volunteers. Another staff member enthusiastically agreed but noted that there would have to be separate sessions for men and women, since some of the East African women might not be allowed to attend if the sessions were open to both sexes. At the same time, however, staff members are trying to find better ways to prepare such women to leave their homes and enter the workplace, where men and women routinely interact. Moreover, staff often do this with a Western emphasis on women's rights, suggesting that the women be forthright in discussing matters with their spouses and partners (which may seem strange and even offensive in their traditional cultures) and encouraging them to assert their interests instead of remaining silent. "I was talking to [an East African resident] the other day," said a Jobs-Plus staff member at Rainier Vista, "and she told me that her husband said to her, 'You used to be so quiet, now you say everything.' [The resident] said she answered, '[The Jobs-Plus staff] taught me.' I've taught her to be more confident. At her job, they're priming her to become the assistant manager once she works on her writing skills more."

Such attitudes and conduct may advance women in the workplace, but a Rainier Vista housing management staff member acknowledged that acquiring them "is a difficult transition to make if you're not accustomed to talking to others in that way." Moreover, a focus on em-

ployment and women's rights can intensify internal conflicts in these women and tensions with their partners as they struggle to navigate a foreign cultural landscape.

The Jobs-Plus staff at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista constantly struggle with questions about what the residents have to learn in order to earn a livelihood in the United States, just as a Westerner would have to learn from these residents the skills needed to survive in their societies. And can this be done without fundamentally undercutting core values of these communities? The staff are anxious not to impose Western values on residents, as though these are superior to their own, and they insist that Western employment practices can certainly benefit from the infusion of other cultural priorities.

Nor is it necessarily helpful to look to ethnic staff members to take the lead in addressing these questions. Ethnic staff themselves are often experiencing profound cultural conflicts in reconciling the standards of their social work profession, the program's employment objectives, and the claims of their cultural tradition. They may experience moral conflicts over the work mandates that welfare reform requires them to enforce and the traditional customs that their communities expect them to uphold. For instance, a Jobs-Plus staff member at Mt. Airy talked about the cultural obligation to take care of relatives and friends who may not be in the immediate household but to whom there is a social obligation. But the welfare system does not recognize them in its exemptions from work requirements. "It's hard," said the staff member. "You have the law of the United States, and you have your own culture. You have what you perceive is right. Do I tell my client: 'It's all right. You don't have to spend 30 hours a week finding a job. Someone in your [extended] family is sick. You're the only person in the house that can take care of that person.' Yet you need to uphold the rules or else you may lose the benefits." Similarly, the ReWA job coaches at Rainier Vista often challenge Jobs-Plus's insistence that moving the women into paid employment should be their uppermost concern. For one coach, the conflict between her cultural priorities and the employment message that Jobs-Plus expected her to pass on to residents eventually prompted her to resign.

Ethnic staff members also face the prospect that their professional actions can undermine their personal standing in their community, and they face an ongoing struggle to keep their professional lives and personal lives separate. "It's hard," a staff member said. "It's such a small community. You'll meet [clients] in the grocery shop. You'll see them everywhere. You just have to be very careful in the way you deal with things." This staff member worries that if she turns someone away or does not give satisfactory help, there will be repercussions for her and her family: "They know my aunt. They know my mother. They know my husband and his family. So you have to be very careful." Yet, by involving themselves and inevitably having to take sides in such sensitive matters as domestic abuse, staff members risk being blackballed by their community.

All these factors place unique demands on those who supervise ethnic staff members. The staff supervisor at Mt. Airy has the difficult but critical role of helping the ethnic staff learn to draw effectively on their professional training when dealing with the problems of their community. "I try to be sensitive," the staff member said. But she sometimes has to help the ethnic staff members place limits on the claims that their community and its customs can have on their professional lives and practices.

Culturally Specific or Multicultural Services?

Finally, all of Jobs-Plus's efforts to target services to specific ethnic groups at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista also stand in tension with the program's efforts to prepare foreign-born residents for a multicultural workplace and to build in the housing development a multicultural community that supports working residents in general. Jobs-Plus has found that many foreign-born residents do not welcome programs that directly promote cross-group multiculturalism. For instance, Promoting Assets Across Cultures (PAAC) is a multicultural program for youth that the Seattle Housing Authority has been sponsoring at its ethnically diverse housing developments. PAAC tries to foster leadership and skills development among youth in school by building cross-cultural links between the youth and their families in public housing developments. So far PAAC's multicultural approach has met with little success at Rainier Vista and other ethnically diverse developments in Seattle. It is yet unclear whether this can be attributed to problems with the program's implementation or to the apparent preference of the parents and youth for ethnically organized groups and meetings — for the Cambodians, the Vietnamese, and so on.

Nor is it always clear which categories should be used to identify the ethnic groups that ought to be accommodated with separate classes and meetings, translators, referral arrangements with ethnic service providers, and Jobs-Plus staff members of the same ethnic background. Broad census categories — "East African," "Southeast Asian" — are woefully inadequate for identifying salient subgroups. The categories that the residents find meaningful in grouping themselves are a mix of languages and dialects, national and regional origins, religion, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Clan designations, for instance, are most significant to the Somali residents; the language spoken in support networks is also important.

Foreign-born residents sometimes bring ethnic tensions and civil conflicts from their homelands that further complicate Jobs-Plus's efforts to provide services to specific ethnic groups. For example, staff members were designing a Web site about Rainier Vista and wanted to communicate the cultural diversity of the development through symbols of the residents' national origins. But when they proposed using national flags for this purpose, the community outreach workers objected. These residents noted that national flags represent only one side of civil conflicts, whereas the residents come from different regions of their homelands and sympathize

with various political factions. For instance, the national flag of Vietnam represents the communist regime of the north, which many of the Vietnamese-born residents from the south opposed in the Vietnam War and fled from as refugees. On another occasion, Rainier Vista's management office hosted a meeting for the "East African residents" to talk about the opportunities and challenges of purchasing a home in Seattle, using savings from the program's rent incentives for this purpose. During the meeting, it was noted that no Somali Muslim residents were present and that they might prefer a separate meeting rather than joining the East African Christians. Since Muslims are prohibited for religious reasons from paying or receiving interest, the issues of homeownership and financial management are different for them. As the meeting continued, however, the residents began murmuring about Muslim practices. Their derisive comments underscored the tension, even outright hostility, that exists between Somali Muslims and the other East Africans at Rainier Vista — which usually remains unspoken or is masked by quiet avoidance at group functions for "the East African community."

Jobs-Plus tries to be sensitive to such divisions even as it endeavors to transcend them. "I make sure that everybody knows that this is neutral ground," said a staff member of the Job Resource Center at Rainier Vista. "When the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia was really bad, people could come here and get news on the Internet. But I let them all know that this was neutral. I tell them I think that war is a bad way to do conflict resolution."

Finally, residents who are U.S.-born or belong to ethnic groups with fewer numbers at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista sometimes feel left out and express resentment of these ethnically specific services. "They have these groups," said a Latina resident. "They seem to be segregating [some services] to just one nationality. I think it should be open and broadened to whomever. I think when there is a language barrier there should be an interpreter there. But it should be open. It doesn't matter what nationality you are. Everyone has the same problems. . . . There are a lot of women who come here and ask me, 'Why is it that this group has that? Why don't they open it up to everyone?'"

It seems clear that future attempts to establish Jobs-Plus in diverse communities have to begin with a community-mapping effort that identifies which ethnic categories are salient to the residents themselves, particularly regarding their employment networks and patterns of social interaction — and social avoidance.

Conclusions

As public housing populations become increasingly diverse, the efforts of housing authorities to assist residents of many different ethnic backgrounds to secure employment and attain self-sufficiency need to anticipate the kinds of challenges that the Jobs-Plus programs at Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista have encountered. The lessons that are illustrated herein also speak to other employment programs that serve foreign-born residents, who usually require far more

than ESL classes and translation services. Their social, personal, and domestic barriers to employment are wide-ranging and have cultural dimensions that do not respond readily to standard employment and support services.

Programs need to hire ethnic staff, including well-respected residents, and work with local ethnic agencies to provide culturally appropriate services. These staff members have to be flexible about their service roles and must be willing to leave their offices to reach out to residents in their homes and to accompany them to clinics and courts. The supervisors of ethnic staff must be prepared to help them deal with the conflicts that they may experience between the program's employment objectives and the claims of their culture and community. The program must cultivate referral networks and procedures to cooperate effectively with local ethnic agencies. Moreover, these efforts should be preceded by community-mapping to identify which ethnic categories are meaningful to residents' employment networks and social interactions and conflicts.

Inevitably, costs and trade-offs are involved. Programs must balance residents' needs and preferences for ethnically specific services with the goals of preparing people to function in a multicultural workplace and of building a peaceful, multiethnic community in the housing development. Indeed, an employment program entrusted with the responsibility of reminding residents of their obligation to comply with welfare-to-work mandates may find itself challenging traditional practices when those undermine residents' ability to work or are rejected altogether by certain categories of adults. Ultimately, the funds and staff time needed to provide ethnically specific services are limited, particularly when the range and severity of employment barriers and the number of groups to be accommodated are considerable. At the end of the day, Jobs-Plus staff must find pragmatic ways within funding and staff constraints to "make do" in their efforts to help residents address their employment needs.

As dusk settles over Mt. Airy and Rainier Vista, the staff are still making calls to catch residents as they come home from work — to ask about their jobs, to tell them about a training opportunity, to encourage them to enroll in the next ESL class. One of them acknowledged: "It's easy to tell someone, 'Here, you need a high school diploma. I have a class for you.' I try to find some way to benefit them. Something that may be the same way but less painful." Mrs. Kao can be seen leaving for her night shift, still as tired as when she came home from work that morning. For residents who face obstacles like Mr. and Mrs. Kao, the "less painful" way takes the form of practical steps that are sensitive to their values and circumstances, such as setting them up with work supervisors who speak their language or simply backing off when their culture conflicts with social policy. Although the situation is less than ideal, residents who need help are assured of a warm welcome at Jobs-Plus.

Recent Publications on MDRC Projects

Note: For works not published by MDRC, the publisher's name is shown in parentheses. With a few exceptions, this list includes reports published by MDRC since 1999. A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site (www.mdrc.org), from which copies of MDRC's publications can also be downloaded.

Reforming Welfare and Making Work Pay

Next Generation Project

A collaboration among researchers at MDRC and several other leading research institutions focused on studying the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Children: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Pamela Morris, Aletha Huston, Greg Duncan, Danielle Crosby, Johannes Bos.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos.

How Welfare and Work Policies for Parents Affect Adolescents: A Synthesis of Research. 2002. Lisa A. Gennetian, Greg J. Duncan, Virginia W. Knox, Wanda G. Vargas, Elizabeth Clark-Kauffman, Andrew S. London.

ReWORKing Welfare: Technical Assistance for States and Localities

A multifaceted effort to assist states and localities in designing and implementing their welfare reform programs. The project includes a series of "how-to" guides, conferences, briefings, and customized, in-depth technical assistance.

After AFDC: Welfare-to-Work Choices and Challenges for States. 1997. Dan Bloom.

Work First: How to Implement an Employment-Focused Approach to Welfare Reform. 1997. Amy Brown.

Business Partnerships: How to Involve Employers in Welfare Reform. 1998. Amy Brown, Maria Buck, Erik Skinner.

Promoting Participation: How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities. 1999. Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener.

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce. 2000. Julie Strawn, Karin Martinson.

Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce. 2001. Amy Brown.

Project on Devolution and Urban Change

A multiyear study in four major urban counties — Cuyahoga County, Ohio (which includes the city of Cleveland), Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia — that examines how welfare reforms are being implemented and affect poor people, their neighborhoods, and the institutions that serve them.

Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Olis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

Food Security and Hunger in Poor, Mother-Headed Families in Four U.S. Cities. 2000. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations. 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Johannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

Post-TANF Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits: Factors That Aid or Impede Their Receipt. 2001. Janet Quint, Rebecca Widom.

Social Service Organizations and Welfare Reform. 2001. Barbara Fink, Rebecca Widom.

Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring? 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

The Health of Poor Urban Women: Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 2001. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

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Is Work Enough? The Experiences of Current and Former Welfare Mothers Who Work. 2001. Denise Polit, Rebecca Widom, Kathryn Edin, Stan Bowie, Andrew London, Ellen Scott, Abel Valenzuela.

Readying Welfare Recipients for Work: Lessons from Four Big Cities as They Implement Welfare Reform. 2002. Thomas Brock, Laura Nelson, Megan Reiter.

Welfare Reform in Cleveland: Implementation, Effects, and Experiences of Poor Families and Neighborhoods. 2002. Thomas Brock, Claudia Coulton, Andrew London, Denise Polit, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Ellen Scott, Nandita Verma.

Wisconsin Works

This study examines how Wisconsin's welfare-to-work program, one of the first to end welfare as an entitlement, is administered in Milwaukee.

Complaint Resolution in the Context of Welfare Reform: How W-2 Settles Disputes. 2001. Suzanne Lynn.

Exceptions to the Rule: The Implementation of 24-Month Time-Limit Extensions in W-2. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle.

Matching Applicants with Services: Initial Assessments in the Milwaukee County W-2 Program. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle, Ben Glispie.

Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Conceived and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), this demonstration project is aimed at testing various ways to help low-income people find, keep, and advance in jobs.

New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project (HHS). 2002. Dan Bloom, Jacquelyn Anderson, Melissa Wavelet, Karen Gardiner, Michael Fishman.

Time Limits

Welfare Time Limits: State Policies, Implementation, and Effects on Families. 2002. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, Barbara Fink.

Florida's Family Transition Program

An evaluation of Florida's initial time-limited welfare program, which includes services, requirements, and financial work incentives intended to reduce long-term welfare receipt and help welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

The Family Transition Program: Implementation and Three-Year Impacts of Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 1999. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, James Kemple, Nandita Verma.

The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 2000. Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare

An examination of the implementation of some of the first state-initiated time-limited welfare programs.

Welfare Time Limits: An Interim Report Card. 1999. Dan Bloom.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program

An evaluation of Connecticut's statewide time-limited welfare program, which includes financial work incentives and requirements to participate in employment-related services aimed at rapid job placement. This study provides some of the earliest information on the effects of time limits in major urban areas.

Connecticut Post-Time Limit Tracking Study: Six-Month Survey Results. 1999. Jo Anna Hunter-Manns, Dan Bloom.

Jobs First: Implementation and Early Impacts of Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative. 2000. Dan Bloom, Laura Melton, Charles Michalopoulos, Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program: An Analysis of Welfare Leavers. 2000. Laura Melton, Dan Bloom.

Final Report on Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative. 2002. Dan Bloom, Susan Scrivener, Charles Michalopoulos, Pamela Morris, Richard Hendra, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Johanna Walter.

Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project

An evaluation of Vermont's statewide welfare reform program, which includes a work requirement after a certain period of welfare receipt, and financial work incentives.

Forty-Two Month Impacts of Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 1999. Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

WRP: Key Findings from the Forty-Two-Month Client Survey. 2000. Dan Bloom, Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

WRP: Final Report on Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 2002. Susan Scrivener, Richard Hendra, Cindy Redcross, Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter.

Financial Incentives

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Minnesota Family Investment Program

An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. 2000:
- *Volume 1: Effects on Adults*. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox, Lisa Gennetian, Martey Dodoo, Jo Anna Hunter, Cindy Redcross.
- *Volume 2: Effects on Children*. Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, Lisa Gennetian.

Final Report on the Implementation and Impacts of the Minnesota Family Investment Program in Ramsey County. 2000. Patricia Auspos, Cynthia Miller, Jo Anna Hunter.

New Hope Project

A test of a community-based, work-focused antipoverty program and welfare alternative operating in Milwaukee.

New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare. 1999. Johannes Bos, Aletha Huston, Robert Granger, Greg Duncan, Thomas Brock, Vonnie McLoyd.

Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project

A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients. Reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project are available from: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), 275 Slater St., Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9, Canada. Tel.: 613-237-4311; Fax: 613-237-5045. In the United States, the reports are also available from MDRC.

Does SSP Plus Increase Employment? The Effect of Adding Services to the Self-Sufficiency Project's Financial Incentives (SRDC). 1999. Gail Quets, Philip Robins, Elsie Pan, Charles Michalopoulos, David Card.

When Financial Work Incentives Pay for Themselves: Early Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study (SRDC). 1999. Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins, David Card.

The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects of a Financial Work Incentive on Employment and Income (SRDC). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, David Card, Lisa Gennetian, Kristen Harknett, Philip K. Robins.

The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects on Children of a Program That Increased Parental Employment and Income (SRDC). 2000. Pamela Morris, Charles Michalopoulos.

When Financial Incentives Pay for Themselves: Interim Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study (SRDC). 2001. Charles Michalopoulos, Tracey Hoy.

SSP Plus at 36 Months: Effects of Adding Employment Services to Financial Work Incentives (SRDC). 2001. Ying Lei, Charles Michalopoulos.

Making Work Pay: Final Report on the Self-Sufficiency Project for Long-Term Welfare Recipients (SRDC). 2002. Charles Michalopoulos, Doug Tattrie, Cynthia Miller, Philip Robins, Pamela Morris, David Gyarmati, Cindy Redcross, Kelly Foley, Reuben Ford.

Mandatory Welfare Employment Programs

National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies

Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

Evaluating Alternative Welfare-to-Work Approaches: Two-Year Impacts for Eleven Programs (HHS/ED). 2000. Stephen Freedman, Daniel Friedlander, Gayle Hamilton, JoAnn Rock, Marisa Mitchell, Jodi Nudelman, Amanda Schweder, Laura Storto.

Impacts on Young Children and Their Families Two Years After Enrollment: Findings from the Child Outcomes Study (HHS/ED). 2000. Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Kristin Moore, Suzanne LeMenestrel.

What Works Best for Whom: Impacts of 20 Welfare-to-Work Programs by Subgroup (HHS/ED). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Christine Schwartz.

Evaluating Two Approaches to Case Management: Implementation, Participation Patterns, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of the Columbus Welfare-to-Work Program (HHS/ED). 2001. Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs – Executive Summary (HHS/ED). 2001. Gayle Hamilton, Stephen Freedman, Lisa Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Surjeet Ahluwalia, Jennifer Brooks.

Moving People from Welfare to Work: Lessons from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2002. Gayle Hamilton.

Los Angeles's Jobs-First GAIN Program
An evaluation of Los Angeles's refocused GAIN (welfare-to-work) program, which emphasizes rapid employment. This is the first in-depth study of a full-scale "work first" program in one of the nation's largest urban areas.

The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: First-Year Findings on Participation Patterns and Impacts. 1999. Stephen Freedman, Marisa Mitchell, David Navarro.

The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: Final Report on a Work First Program in a Major Urban Center. 2000. Stephen Freedman, Jean Knab, Lisa Gennetian, David Navarro.

Teen Parents on Welfare

Teenage Parent Programs: A Synthesis of the Long-Term Effects of the New Chance Demonstration, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD). 1998. Robert Granger, Rachel Cytron.

Ohio's LEAP Program
An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents. 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

New Chance Demonstration
A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

New Chance: Final Report on a Comprehensive Program for Young Mothers in Poverty and Their Children. 1997. Janet Quint, Johannes Bos, Denise Polit.

Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study. 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

Focusing on Fathers

Parents' Fair Share Demonstration
A demonstration for unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare. PFS aims to improve the men's employment and earnings, reduce child poverty by increasing child support payments, and assist the fathers in playing a broader constructive role in their children's lives.

Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood (Russell Sage Foundation). 1999. Earl Johnson, Ann Levine, Fred Doolittle.

Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cindy Redcross.

Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment. 2000. John M. Martinez, Cynthia Miller.

The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum. 2000. Eileen Hayes, with Kay Sherwood.

The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share. 2001. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox

Career Advancement and Wage Progression

Opening Doors to Earning Credentials
An exploration of strategies for increasing low-wage workers' access to and completion of community college programs.

Opening Doors: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers. 2001. Susan Golonka, Lisa Matus-Grossman.

Welfare Reform and Community Colleges: A Policy and Research Context. 2002. Thomas Brock, Lisa Matus-Grossman, Gayle Hamilton.

Opening Doors: Students' Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College. 2002. Lisa Matus-Grossman, Susan Gooden.

Education Reform

Accelerated Schools

This study examines the implementation and impacts on achievement of the Accelerated Schools model, a whole-school reform targeted at at-risk students.

Evaluating the Accelerated Schools Approach: A Look at Early Implementation and Impacts on Student Achievement in Eight Elementary Schools. 2001. Howard Bloom, Sandra Ham, Laura Melton, Julienne O'Brien.

Career Academies

The largest and most comprehensive evaluation of a school-to-work initiative, this study examines a promising approach to high school restructuring and the school-to-work transition.

Career Academies: Building Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning Activities Through Employer Partnerships. 1999. James Kemple, Susan Poglinco, Jason Snipes.

Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School. 2000. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment. 2001. James Kemple.

First Things First

This demonstration and research project looks at First Things First, a whole-school reform that combines a variety of best practices aimed at raising achievement and graduation rates in both urban and rural settings.

Scaling Up First Things First: Site Selection and the Planning Year. 2002. Janet Quint.

Project GRAD

This evaluation examines Project GRAD, an education initiative targeted at urban schools and combining a number of proven or promising reforms.

Building the Foundation for Improved Student Performance: The Pre-Curricular Phase of Project GRAD Newark. 2000. Sandra Ham, Fred Doolittle, Glee Ivory Holton.

LILAA Initiative

This study of the Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) initiative explores the efforts of five adult literacy programs in public libraries to improve learner persistence.

So I Made Up My Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs. 2000. John T. Comings, Sondra Cuban.

"I Did It for Myself": Studying Efforts to Increase Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs. 2001. John Comings, Sondra Cuban, Johannes Bos, Catherine Taylor.

Toyota Families in Schools

A discussion of the factors that determine whether an impact analysis of a social program is feasible and warranted, using an evaluation of a new family literacy initiative as a case study.

An Evaluability Assessment of the Toyota Families in Schools Program. 2001. Janet Quint.

Project Transition

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed. 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

Equity 2000

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools. 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

School-to-Work Project

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995. Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs. 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

Employment and Community Initiatives

Jobs-Plus Initiative

A multisite effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. James Riccio.

Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

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Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Program Implementation. 2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom with Susan Blank.

Building New Partnerships for Employment: Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 2001. Linda Kato, James Riccio.

Making Work Pay for Public Housing Residents: Financial-Incentive Designs at Six Jobs-Plus Demonstration Sites. 2002. Cynthia Miller, James Riccio.

The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities: The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments. 2002. Linda Kato.

The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents: Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey. 2002. John Martinez.

Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

An initiative to increase employment in a number of low-income communities.

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative. 2001. Frieda Molina, Laura Nelson.

Structures of Opportunity: Developing the Neighborhood Jobs Initiative in Fort Worth, Texas. 2002. Tony Proscio.

Connections to Work Project

A study of local efforts to increase competition in the choice of providers of employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income populations. The project also provides assistance to cutting-edge local initiatives aimed at helping such people access and secure jobs.

Designing and Administering a Wage-Paying Community Service Employment Program Under TANF: Some Considerations and Choices. 1999. Kay Sherwood.

San Francisco Works: Toward an Employer-Led Approach to Welfare Reform and Workforce Development. 2000. Steven Bliss.

Canada's Earnings Supplement Project

A test of an innovative financial incentive intended to expedite the reemployment of displaced workers and encourage full-year work by seasonal or part-year workers, thereby also reducing receipt of Unemployment Insurance.

Testing a Re-employment Incentive for Displaced Workers: The Earnings Supplement Project. 1999. Howard Bloom, Saul Schwartz, Susanna Lui-Gurr, Suk-Won Lee.

MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology

A new series of papers that explore alternative methods of examining the implementation and impacts of programs and policies.

Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Estimating Program Impacts on Student Achievement Using "Short" Interrupted Time Series. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Using Cluster Random Assignment to Measure Program Impacts: Statistical Implications for the Evaluation of Education Programs. 1999. Howard Bloom, Johannes Bos, Suk-Won Lee.

Measuring the Impacts of Whole School Reforms: Methodological Lessons from an Evaluation of Accelerated Schools. 2001. Howard Bloom.

The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy. 2000. Judith Gueron.

Modeling the Performance of Welfare-to-Work Programs: The Effects of Program Management and Services, Economic Environment, and Client Characteristics. 2001. Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, James Riccio.

A Regression-Based Strategy for Defining Subgroups in a Social Experiment. 2001. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

Extending the Reach of Randomized Social Experiments: New Directions in Evaluations of American Welfare-to-Work and Employment Initiatives. 2001. James Riccio, Howard Bloom.

About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and Oakland, California.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

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